



confronted!

discussion starters on faith
and justice — and on india

Michael, with love.

confronted!

**discussion starters on faith
and justice — and on india**

by

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how to use dramatic discussion starters

These dramatic discussion starters were written for the use of church and community groups and informal programs related to India and Faith and Justice.

Simple staging directions have been provided for the use of those who wish to give stage productions, but the dramas may be used effectively without settings or props of any kind. The stage may be an actual stage, but it may also be the playing area in a room where a study group is meeting.

Parts may be memorized and action carried out as in the directions, or the discussion starters may be used as readings, with the players remaining in their chairs.

Since these dramas were planned primarily for the purpose of provoking discussion of the ideas they suggest, questions for discussion have been provided at the end of each drama. If the viewing group is large, participants should be divided into smaller subgroups, each with a leader, in order that all may have the opportunity to contribute their ideas. After the questions have been discussed in the subgroups, the participants may re-assemble in the total group and compare ideas.

is this justice?

by myra scovel

TIME: The present

PLACE: The living room of a well-to-do Hindu family in Delhi, North India

(The furniture and style are typically Western, though Indian vases hold garden flowers and Indian brasses are used for decoration. Entrances, left and right, are hung with Indian prints. A couch and two armchairs are grouped a little to the left of center [and far enough forward for the actors to be heard]. A small table against a wall, a lamp, a rug will add to the effect.)

CHARACTERS:

Mohan Das Gupta (Mōhən Dās Góoptə), retired business man of Delhi, who has just returned from the traditional year of pilgrimage undertaken when a man becomes sixty

Krishan (Krīshən), his son, in his mid-twenties, now a partner in the family business

Sita (Séetə), twenty, betrothed to Krishan, their two families having been friends for many years

COSTUMES: The men wear suits appropriate for an informal evening party. Sita wears a sari.

As the scene opens, sounds of departing guests are heard, off-stage, left:

Such a lovely party.
Great to have you back with us.
Don't leave us again, now, will you?
Good night.
Good night.

Enter Mohan Das Gupta, followed by Krishan with Sita. They relax comfortably, Mr. Gupta in chair, left, Sita and Krishan seated on the couch.

KRISHAN: *(with a sigh)* That's the last of the good nights.

SITA: It was such a glorious party. What a welcome home, Gupta-ji!

KRISHAN: Yes, Father, how does it seem to be the host of one of your famous parties after a year of doing nothing but visiting the holy places?

MOHAN

DAS GUPTA: It is good to be home again. But . . .

KRISHAN: But what?

M.D.G.: How can people change so much in so short a time?

KRISHAN: They haven't changed. They're just as they've always been. I could have predicted every word that was said. You're the one who has changed.

M.D.G.: What do you mean?

KRISHAN: Well, for one thing, you didn't spend the whole evening boasting about your business conquests.

SITA: (*smiling*) Nor about your son?

KRISHAN: It was a great relief, I must admit.

M.D.G.: Was I that bad?

KRISHAN: You were pretty bad. And Mother is even worse. She still thinks of me as the little boy who loved to go to the temple with her each morning before dawn. I used to carry her tray full of marigold petals for the offering.

SITA: Every morning? And up before dawn? You?

KRISHAN: I know it's hard to believe, but you know how Mother brought me up. Personal preference had nothing to do with carrying out religious duties. I've seen her stumble along when she was ill. And at the height of the monsoon rains, too.

SITA: How you must have hated it!

KRISHAN: I loved it, especially during the rains. In a way, those were the best years of my life. Everything was so clear then; so believable.

SITA: Didn't your mother look beautiful tonight?

M.D.G.: She is always beautiful; beautiful in every way.

KRISHAN: She was like a withered flower when you were gone. Now she is blooming again.

SITA: I must see what I can do to help her.

They rise as she leaves the room. Exit, right. Then Krishan takes his place on the couch while M.D.G. paces up and down the room.

KRISHAN: Father, what was it like, your pilgrimage? How does a man of the world, a man of action, adjust to it?

M.D.G.: It's hard to explain, (*pauses, then, as if to himself*) much harder than I'd expected it to be.

KRISHAN: So, you were restless, as I thought you would be?

M.D.G.: Restless? Yes, especially at first. But then I began to see the faces of the people. It's appalling what you find as you walk the roads of this country. Krishan, you have no idea of the suffering.

KRISHAN: There is enough of it here, on the streets of Delhi.

M.D.G.: (*sits in chair, left*) I guess I was too busy to notice . . . then. But I have been thinking about it. I have prayed and meditated and . . .

KRISHAN: (*interrupting*) I'm sorry, Father, but I just can't picture the great business mogul, Mohan Das Gupta, praying and meditating.

M.D.G.: A year ago, I would have laughed at the idea. Now I couldn't face what lies ahead without it.

KRISHAN: Surely, you're not going back to a life of pilgrimage!

M.D.G.: No, I'm not. It's the need here in Delhi that calls me home.

KRISHAN: Then you know? Who told you that Gupta, Ltd. is in trouble? I didn't want to talk to you about it so soon after your arrival.

M.D.G.: Oh, that! (*dismissing it with a wave of his hand*)

KRISHAN: What do you mean, "Oh, that!"?

M.D.G.: I'm not interested in the administration of Gupta, Ltd.

KRISHAN: You're not interested! I thought when you came back you'd step right into things again. Father, we're in bad shape. (*rises and paces, restlessly*)

M.D.G.: I'm sure you and Uncle will work it out.

KRISHAN: We won't work it out at all. Uncle and I don't see eye to eye on anything. Besides . . . (*he hesitates*)

M.D.G.: Besides what? Sit down and tell me what's on your mind.

KRISHAN: If you only knew how many times I've wanted to tell you this, but I could never bring myself to . . . Father, I've always

done everything you wanted me to, haven't I?

M.D.G.: We couldn't have had a more dutiful son. Your mother and I have often spoken about it. We feel we've been very . . .

KRISHAN: (*interrupting*) But I just can't do it any longer.

M.D.G.: What do you mean?

KRISHAN: I can't go on, that's all. I just can't. I used to envy the American kids at school. They were all planning what they would be when they got out in the world. All they seemed to have to do was to say they were, quote-unquote, "following God's will for their lives." Their missionary parents would beam with pride and the kids were free to do whatever they wanted to. *I* was chained to Gupta, Ltd. (*slowly and with emphasis*) Father, I have always hated Gupta, Ltd. I want to be released. I want to be free.

M.D.G.: If you left the firm, what would you do instead?

KRISHAN: I don't know—anything, everything, nothing; get to know . . . well, someone besides this bunch that were here tonight.

M.D.G.: You should have told me all this before.

KRISHAN: I've tried. God knows I've tried, but somehow you're different. You're sitting there listening to me, really wanting to know

what I think. And I'm sitting here telling you something I wouldn't have dared to mention, even a week ago.

M.D.G.: You say you envied your Christian friends. Tell me the truth; did you ever think of becoming one of them?

KRISHAN: A Gupta could never let such a thought enter his mind. Could he, Father?

M.D.G.: This is a night for being honest. Krishan, I made a decision on this pilgrimage, a decision I never expected to make, a decision that has changed my attitude toward everything.

KRISHAN: Yes?

M.D.G.: I want to tell you why I came home.

KRISHAN: Because Gupta, Ltd. needed you. Isn't that what you said? (*M.D.G. does not answer*)

KRISHAN: Well, isn't it?

M.D.G.: No.

KRISHAN: What other decision could you have possibly made?

Sita has entered, right. Stops, puzzled at what she hears. She remains, half hidden behind the drapes.

M.D.G.: I have become a Christian.

KRISHAN: You, a Christian? Is this some kind of a joke?

M.D.G.: I'm serious; I have become a follower of Christ.

- KRISHAN: Father, are you sure you're all right? You're not sick, or . . . you haven't had a bad fall or something?
- M.D.G.: I have never felt better in my life. I've found something in Christianity that makes me want to shout, "Yes!" to life for the first time.
- KRISHAN: This is so unlike you. Are you *sure* you're all right?
- M.D.G.: Study the life of Christ, Krishan; then you'll understand. He made men feel like princes. He told them they were capable of becoming sons of God. Think of it—all men, everywhere, princes!
- KRISHAN: But they aren't. Look around you. A sweeper is not a prince and shouldn't feel like one. Or act like one, either.
- M.D.G.: Why not?
- KRISHAN: Oh, Father, you know why not. You're not the first Hindu to be troubled about the caste system. Our own government has declared it illegal. But in our hearts, we Hindus know that a man is born into the life he deserves because of his actions in former lives. There's no other way to explain why some of us have everything and the rest, nothing.
- M.D.G.: A Christian sweeper *knows* he is a son of God, Krishan.
- KRISHAN: (*jumping to his feet*) Father! I'm all con-

fused; it sounds like blasphemy. I wish I could wake up and find this has been some horrible nightmare.

M.D.G.: Please be patient with me and try to understand.

KRISHAN: I don't have to remind *you* that we are Brahmins. If *we* do not uphold the traditions, who will? We of the highest caste have the responsibility for all the others.

M.D.G.: That's just it. We haven't taken that responsibility. We at Gupta, Ltd., and I as part of it, have exploited the poor for years. It was your uncle, good Hindu that he is, who first pointed this out to me. It was he who suggested the pilgrimage to give it some thought.

KRISHAN: That's strange. Maybe I've misunderstood Uncle. I've been thinking he just didn't know how to handle the business. I kept telling him we'd lose money if we raised wages . . .

M.D.G.: And he'd reply, "There is something more important than money. The good you do now will help you in the next life; besides, the workers need it."

KRISHAN: And I'd tell him what you used to tell him, Father. Either we're in business or we're not. If the firm should close, the workers wouldn't even have what they've got now. And that's true.

M.D.G.: Then it will do no good for me to tell you

that I've come back to use up all my money in building better housing for these families we've impoverished in the past; to set up health clinics and to build schools for their children.

KRISHAN: You can do all that and still be a Hindu. Uncle will be delighted.

M.D.G.: Somehow I've got to make you see that there is no turning back. This means too much to me. It's a different kind of giving—a giving of one's self along with the rupees. I plan to live there with our workers.

KRISHAN: (*jumping to his feet as Sita bursts into the room*) You can't do that. You can't live with low caste people; some of them are outcastes.

SITA: You'd live with sweepers? What would people think? You'd bring disgrace upon us all!

KRISHAN: What about Mother?

SITA: Yes, what about her?

M.D.G.: I have already amply provided for your mother.

KRISHAN: But Father, you speak of giving one's self. Mother needs more than your money. She needs your love and protection.

M.D.G.: I still hope that some day she . . .

KRISHAN: And what about Gupta, Ltd.? Uncle is

getting old. The disgrace will hurt him badly. Our competitors will make a lot of this. And Father, doesn't what I told you about my future with Gupta Ltd. mean anything to you?

SITA: What are you talking about, Krishan?

M.D.G.: You must remember, son, that all this planning was done when I thought of you as being happy in the work you were doing, with all our family's share of the proceeds coming in to you.

KRISHAN: And am I still to be chained to Gupta, Ltd.?

SITA: What do you mean, chained? Are we also facing some financial crisis? Isn't it enough to be so disgraced?

KRISHAN: Now, Sita. He hasn't done anything to disgrace us yet. Nobody knows about this except we three.

SITA: My parents will find out.

KRISHAN: Yes, your parents. What will they do?

SITA: You know what they will do. (*she bursts into tears*) They chose you to be my husband because yours was a devout Hindu family, one without a blemish of scandal. (*turns on M.D.G.*) Gupta-ji, will you ruin our marriage as well as your own?

KRISHAN: Father, be realistic. What will happen when all your money is gone? Where will your poor be then? Worse off than before,

because they will have grown accustomed to a better life.

M.D.G.: The Christian guru would quote the Bible: "The just shall live by faith."

SITA: The just? The just? You call this that you are doing to all of us, justice? It will kill your wife. You know it. How can you be so cold, so cruel?

KRISHAN: Sita! Stop! Father hasn't done anything yet. Mother doesn't know anything about this.

M.D.G.: She will have to know.

KRISHAN: The only solution is for you to go off on a pilgrimage again without saying anything to anyone. Have a good rest at home, first. I can't help feeling that what happened along that road has nothing to do with the real you.

M.D.G.: Children, children. I can't think now. I still feel the pressure of that divine hand on my shoulder. I cannot escape its urgency. Yet, I can't hurt you like this; I can't hurt any one of you.

SITA: It will kill your wife.

KRISHAN: He isn't going to tell Mother anything to-night. Run along and get your coat. I'll take you home.

Sita exits, left. The men rise as she goes out.

KRISHAN: Father, do you realize that Mother would

not even touch you if she knew you were a Christian?

M.D.G.: Krishan, son! Do you think that I have not spent night after sleepless night thinking of this? Leave me, now. Your mother will be coming in very soon. I have to think.

KRISHAN: Good night, Father.

He takes his father's hand and, for a moment, they look into each other's eyes. Then Krishan exits left.

M.D.G.: *(center front, facing audience, he takes a New Testament from his pocket and reads)*

“... the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back . . .” Christ, God, Purest of the pure, when I was lost, You found me. What shall I do? Christ, God, what shall I do?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is Mohan Das Gupta being fair to his family?
2. Do you think he should keep the fact that he is a Christian secret, or witness openly to this change in his life?
3. There are times when one man's clear guidance goes against the thinking of a group of God-guided people. Have you known such instances? When the group was in the right? When the one lone man was in the right?
4. What suggestions would you make to Mohan Das Gupta to help him solve his problem?
5. How do you feel about Krishan's appraisal of the

freedom his fellow students found in following God's will for their lives?

6. Do you find evidence in the play that Krishan is also beginning to ask questions?
7. What do you think Krishan's mother's reaction will be?
8. Are you willing to let God make a change in your life as drastic as the change Mr. Gupta is facing?

to catch a thief, be brave

by gordon c. bennett

TIME: The present

PLACE: A car on Route 70 in Tennessee

CHARACTERS:

Driver: A well dressed middle-aged man

Roger: A young man dressed in a very casual manner

Betty: A young woman dressed in a short dress

Rich: A young man dressed in a jacket and tie

Four chairs should be placed to resemble the front and back seats of a car. They should be set at an angle so that the back two speakers are not hidden from sight. Pantomime should be used as much as freedom from playbooks permits. The hitchhiker, Roger, would stand on stage right initially, with his back to the audience, as the driver, seated in the front left-hand chair, pantomimes slowing down for the passenger. Thumbing, opening the door, getting inside, closing the door, steering, would all be pantomimed ideally. Should any of the language in this play seem inappropriate for your group, change it.

DRIVER: Want a ride, son?

ROGER: No, I'm just wavin' this thumb for my health.

DRIVER: (*shrugs*) Walking is healthier than riding.
But get in!

ROGER: Thanks, dad. The name's Roger.

DRIVER: Hello, Roger. Where are you headed?

ROGER: Nowhere, man.

DRIVER: What?

ROGER: Nowhere, dad. I'm just groovin', man.
Tourin' the old U.S. of A. So you're drivin'
west. I'll tag along and get out whenever
you stop. Okay by me.

DRIVER: But I'm only going to Nashville.

ROGER: So? Let's get with it.

DRIVER: Oh—sure, we're on our way . . . (*panto-*
mimes acceleration) Where are you from?

ROGER: Just about everywhere. Originally—

DRIVER: Yes?

ROGER: My mother's womb.

DRIVER: You seem to like to make cryptic remarks.
Are you—ahh—in some kind of trouble?

ROGER: No, dad. And if I was—would that be
your business?

DRIVER: No.

ROGER: The trouble with your generation, man, is
you like to draw up your conclusions with-
out any real evidence. That the way you
practise law?

DRIVER: How'd you know I am a lawyer?

ROGER: Oh, I can smell 'em, man. Something about your appearance. Smooth dresser, brusque manner camouflaged with a veneer of professional concern. Not to mention how your foot hangs heavy on the gas pedal.

DRIVER: (*lifting his foot*) I'm afraid I do speed on occasion.

ROGER: So you're one of our society's busy, garrulous, mercenary men-at-the-bar.

DRIVER: Now who's jumping to conclusions?

ROGER: Sorry man, I plead guilty. . . .Only—I've had some experience with the men-of-the-bar and they don't exactly—ahh—turn me on.

DRIVER: What does turn you on, Roger?

ROGER: Girls—and travel—bumming around—and bright lights and certain kinds of rock and—ah—livin'.

DRIVER: And pot?

ROGER: There you go again, man, off the deep end. You're gonna burn out your motor if you don't stop racin' ahead.

DRIVER: Sorry. (*eases foot off accelerator*)

ROGER: No, man, not your foot—your mind! Why do you lump people? Don't you know we're all different? People like you look at people like me and you don't see *me*! All you see is my clothing and my hair—hell, you can't judge a man by the length of his

hair! So to you, I have to be a pot-smoking hippie who lives in a commune and scrounges for food and sleeps with a different chick every night. Right?

DRIVER: No. Not really—I—

ROGER: As for the pot, dad. Would it surprise you to know that I haven't touched any grass for three years?

DRIVER: I seem to be off-target.

ROGER: Pot doesn't turn me on. You want to know what does turn me on? Yoga turns me on. It's a kind of self-discipline, a whole new way of thinking and living. It turns me on to myself and to the being inside of me. I've learned how to meditate, see? . . .
(*moment of awkward silence*) What's your religion?

DRIVER: I'm a Christian.

ROGER: That's nice.

DRIVER: You don't approve?

ROGER: Hell, I don't care, man. You could be a predestinarian Calvinist with a strap in one hand and a Bible in the other—and I wouldn't care. I'm not your judge. Just—curious.

DRIVER: I belong to Christ's church.

ROGER: What's he doing there?

DRIVER: Who?

ROGER: Christ. You said it was his church.

DRIVER: He's working through a lot of people in that church.

ROGER: Fine. But how do you know you're really a disciple of his?

DRIVER: It's not easy but—I'm trying to make him Lord of my life, we're trying hard to make him Lord of the church. And that's a big battle when you consider how many years the church has relegated him to the stained-glass and the communion table.

ROGER: You got a point there, man. But as far as I'm concerned, your religion's no better than mine. The big thing is to get your own head together. Know what I mean?

DRIVER: I'm not sure.

ROGER: Look, you gotta find the Brahma.

DRIVER: Brahma?

ROGER: The immortal soul within you. You've got one, I've got one. Yoga teaches you how to suppress bodily and mental activity so that your immortal soul can team up with the world-soul, the absolute. It's right on, man—you're at peace with yourself and with the world. It's serenity—like that calf in the pasture with its mother—not a care in the world. That's what I mean by putting your head together. Know where I learned all this?

DRIVER: No.

- ROGER: India. I was an exchange student for a year. Surprising, huh? I came across this Hindu monastery. The fellows there taught me about meditation—taught me the *how* of it. When I got back here I dropped outa college so's I could wander around—putting my head together—and living. Know what I mean?
- DRIVER: Excuse me if I'm overgeneralizing but—you hippies are supposed to be activists—burning draft cards and picketing banks. But you're just roaming the country, observing and—meditating?
- ROGER: On target. That's my bag—today. Maybe not tomorrow.
- DRIVER: Jesus never said, "Drop out." He seemed to say, "Get with it—help people—live out the gospel."
- ROGER: But the Man went up to a mountain of retreat—and to the desert for prayer—whenever he had to renew his spirit he went off somewhere. To meditate.
- DRIVER: But he always returned.
- ROGER: So maybe I will too—some day. Right now it's not my bag to rip off draft files. Jesus didn't fight Rome, you know. He knew you can't change society until you change the person. That's why his message was "Have faith" instead of "Burn the Romans out" or "Elect me your new Emperor." What's the good of changin' the

system when you haven't changed the person? Anyway, it can't be done.

DRIVER: Are you changing persons?

ROGER: I'm tryin' to change me—and that's a lifetime job!

DRIVER: I believe it.

ROGER: You're over the limit again!

DRIVER: Sorry. I didn't mean to be rude.

ROGER: Not your mouth—your foot. Speed limit's seventy.

DRIVER: Oh . . . (*they look at each other and chuckle*) You're right, I can't afford to pay a ticket this month. Not if I'm going to buy my wife her new carpet.

ROGER: Ah!

DRIVER: I'm puzzled, though. Intellectually you claim a connection with Brahmanism, but you know a lot about Jesus. He's been an influence in your life, I'd guess.

ROGER: He's an influence but he's not my Lord and Master. Nobody can lead you to salvation, man. Everybody has to find his own way.

DRIVER: I'm afraid I need a guide—or a model—like Jesus. When Jesus rocked my life I decided he was the right model for me. So I've studied the New Testament to find out what kind of man he was. Or, *is*.

ROGER: And what sort was—*is*—he?

DRIVER: The advocate of love and truth and joy. A man of concern, really caring about people and *for* them too. The incarnation of Godlike compassion, willing to take the risk—any risk—to follow God's will.

ROGER: You can't imitate that, man. Only the angels. . . .

DRIVER: Only the angels? (*looking off*) There's a young couple looking exhausted. Mind if I give them a lift?

ROGER: Be my guest. Anyway, it's your car.

Driver slows to a stop. The woman (Betty) gets in first, then the man (Rich), both taking back seats. Both appear edgy. When they talk, they sound tense although Betty laughs or giggles—but nervously. Their speech seems less educated than that of the other rider, Roger.

DRIVER: Hello there. Need a ride?

BETTY: (*getting in*) Thanks a lot, mister. (*Rich gets in after her*)

DRIVER: (*starting off*) How far you going?

BETTY: It don't matter.

DRIVER: Don't tell me you people are roaming the country too.

RICH: That what he's doing?

DRIVER: So he says.

BETTY: Where you headin', mister?

DRIVER: Destination, Nashville, or as Roger and I

were just discussing—ultimate destination
—heaven.

BETTY: That's a long way.

DRIVER: Heaven?

BETTY: Nashville.

DRIVER: Half an hour—maybe three quarters.

RICH: What makes you think you're gettin' to
heaven?

DRIVER: Jesus promised it to his followers. Heaven
on earth and heaven in heaven.

RICH: What's that last town back there?

DRIVER: Silo.

RICH: If you've been headin' for heaven all this
time and you're no closer than Silo, Ten-
nessee—I ain't interested. (*Betty giggles*)

DRIVER: You ought to be interested. Your life de-
pends on it.

RICH: (*wary*) Huh?

DRIVER: I mean that Jesus brings you life—life
abundant, full and running over with
joy. I can testify to it, as we say in the
courtroom. Because I'm an eyewitness. It's
happened to me.

RICH: Is this why you pick up hitchhikers? To
preach at 'em?

DRIVER: No, I pick up hitchhikers because I've
been one. When I was a law student in
Richmond I needed every dime for tuition

and books, so I had to hitch rides every day, into town and back out again to where I was staying. You see, I'm indebted to a lot of generous drivers for my education. So as a practical application of the Golden Rule—or just out of gratitude—I return the favor whenever I can.

RICH: It's risky, though. Dangerous to pick up people. You oughta be more careful. How 'bout that, Betty?

BETTY: (*snickering*) You ain't kiddin', Rich.

ROGER: This man's a Christian, he has a conscience. You people should respect a man like that.

RICH: Where do you get off, hippie—talking to me about conscience?

BETTY: Everybody's a preacher today!

ROGER: Just an observation, if you don't mind.

RICH: I do mind.

BETTY: You see, Rich ain't used to anybody ridin' him. He does the ridin'. (*giggles*)

RICH: Shut up, Betty. What she means is, I got no respect for preachers—whether they wear robes or jeans, see?

ROGER: Right on, man!

RICH: Will you shut your mouth, hippie!

DRIVER: Now this man's a guest in my car, and so are the rest of you. I want you to keep

that in mind. I've a good mind to stop and drop you people off right now.

RICH: Just try it, Buster.

BETTY: Keep drivin'. My boy friend is callin' the tune from now on.

DRIVER: What?

RICH: You got the message. Keep drivin' till I tell you where to stop. That's where we get off—with your money.

DRIVER: What? I've got half a mind to—

RICH: If you had a whole mind you'd see I mean business. (*taking out gun*) Feel that metal at the back of your head. I'm takin' your money because I don't mind usin' this gun if I have to. (*driver stiffens*) Don't turn around! Keep your eyes on the road so's we don't have any accidents.

BETTY: Drive on, nice and easy, and you'll live to see your kids and your sexy wife who's spending her day in the beauty salon just for you!

DRIVER: (*strained*) Roger . . .

ROGER: Yeah?

DRIVER: Is it really a gun?

ROGER: Right, man. You better do as they say.

BETTY: That's smart talkin'.

RICH: Let's see you practise some of that do-onto-others routine. You would like me to

give you money so you're gonna do it to me instead.

DRIVER: And if I don't let you have it—you're going to let me have it.

BETTY: (*laughs*) That's cute, Rich!

RICH: Shut up.

BETTY: By the looks of your hippie friend, we don't get any bread outa him. But by the looks of you—we're gonna eat steak soon. Right, Rich?

RICH: Beautiful!

DRIVER: Could I ask a question—before we stop?

RICH: Ahhh!

DRIVER: This your first—I mean—

BETTY: No mister, it's not our first job.

RICH: Shut up. We don't have to answer his questions.

DRIVER: Well—you may learn sooner or later—that the gun is not always going to get you what you want.

RICH: What's that supposed to mean?

DRIVER: I mean—it won't get you everything. There are—(*speaking slowly, with great effort*) some times when a person can't be cowed.

RICH: What?

DRIVER: When a person won't be—bullied.

BETTY: Talk sense.

DRIVER: I mean that—that I can't let you have any money . . .

Long pause, tense atmosphere. Betty snickers.

BETTY: You're travelling without money, mister? You can't fool us with that garbage.

DRIVER: I'm not—not trying to fool you. Actually, I am carrying a good deal of money. Some eight hundred dollars. But it's not mine. So I'm not going to stop and give it to you. And we're going fast enough that if you kill me—there's going to be an awful wreck . . . (*pause*) I can't give you the money because it's not mine.

RICH: I don't care if it's God's, I'm takin' it!

DRIVER: You don't understand. That money means too much to a great many people.

ROGER: What are you sayin', man? You tryin' to be a hero? Just do what he wants so we get outa this alive!

BETTY: That's smart talk. Listen to the hippie, driver.

ROGER: That's a real gun, man. Don't antagonize the guy. What's the sense? Just do as he says. Our lives—yours and mine—are worth more than eight hundred dollars.

DRIVER: I'm sorry you're involved in this. If I could just—

ROGER: Why me? All I want is a little peace. Why

do I have to hitch a ride with a hero?

BETTY: (*laughs uproariously*) Better think it over!
As the Christians say, are you ready to—
how does it go?

RICH: Are you ready to meet your Maker, mister?

DRIVER: I've already met him. And if this is the
way he's promoting me to the next world,
I'm ready.

BETTY: Huh?

DRIVER: I said . . .

RICH: We heard what you said but it don't make
sense. What makes you act so brave?

BETTY: What about that money? If it don't belong
to you, whose money is it?

DRIVER: It belongs to my church. Part of a fund
we're collecting for the victims of the
war in Vietnam. Children! Vietnamese
children who've suffered in the war—lost
an arm or leg or were burned horribly by
napalm. This money will bring at least
one sick child to this country for treat-
ment.

RICH: And you're runnin' off with the money?

DRIVER: I'm taking it to the bank.

BETTY: If you ever get it there.

RICH: I don't get it! Why? Why are you doing
all this?

DRIVER: It's a way of helping make amends—just

a little bit—for what both sides have done to destroy Vietnam. And we're doing it because Jesus loved children—and he would want us to take care of these children. And—maybe—it's a way of bringing a little justice into this world.

ROGER: It's a bit late for that.

RICH: What do you mean?

ROGER: Justice means stop the stupid war. Justice is never starting it in the first place.

BETTY: I don't get it. I don't understand any of you. Come on, Rich, let's get the money and go.

RICH: Shut up, Betty. Hey, Hippie, this man's got what you want—peace, peace inside himself. It's weird.

ROGER: There, you're right on, it is weird. I don't dig his way and I don't dig yours either. Look man, I wanta opt out, so stop the car, please?

DRIVER: All right, it's not fair to keep you here. *(pulls car to a stop)* We'll stop here and you can leave.

ROGER: *(getting out—anxiously)* Sorry man. Good luck. I mean—

RICH: Beat it kid! *(Roger leaves rapidly)* . . . *(pause)*

DRIVER: *(driver half turns)* All right. You have the gun and you can use it.

RICH: Does that mean you won't give me the money?

DRIVER: It means you're going to have to take it . . .
(*pause*)

BETTY: (*nervously*) Come on Rich, sock him and let's get the money.

RICH: Shut up! . . . You mean you—that money means so much to you—those kids—(*incredulous*)—you won't give us that money?

DRIVER: Those kids are burned, broken and bleeding. They need that money, Rich—for medical treatment—maybe a whole new life.

RICH: (*thinking it through*) . . . For Christ's sake!

DRIVER: Yes. . . . Isn't that the point?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the motivating force in the life of each of the four characters? What do they want? What are their goals? To what extent can you identify with any of them?
2. Does the driver ring true? Are there people with that kind of courage? Do you know any Christians like that? Where did the man get his courage?
3. How would you finish the story?
4. Is Roger right when he says that you can't change society until you change individual persons? Do you think Roger is a person who is following this philoso-

- phy sensibly or just "copping out" on life? Is he right that every man must follow his own "way"?
5. What is the relationship between faith and social justice, according to the driver? How does he express this? Was it his belief in Jesus or his social action that impressed the holdup man more?
 6. What are some other ways in which the holdup man might have responded to the driver's decision not to give up the money? Does Christian living always involve risk—even for those not put in such a dramatic position? What risks have you taken lately? Voluntarily. For Christ. For his people.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO DISCUSSION

Stimulate discussion by asking for reactions to various lines in the play.

1. DRIVER: . . . the church has relegated him to the stained-glass and the communion table.
2. ROGER: What's the good of changin' the system when you haven't changed the person? Anyway, it can't be done.
3. ROGER: Nobody can lead you to salvation, man. Everybody has to find his own way.
4. DRIVER: There are some times when a person can't be cowed.
5. RICH: Are you ready to meet your Maker, mister?
6. RICH: What makes you act so brave?
7. ROGER: Justice means to stop the stupid war. Justice is never starting it in the first place.

a purely irrelevant factor

by mae hurley ashworth

TIME: The present

PLACE: The family-room of a middle-class home

CHARACTERS:

Helen Reynolds, an enthusiastic member of a women's liberation group

Norma Anderson, a member of the same group, but not so completely committed

Bob Anderson, Norma's husband

Norma walks onstage, carrying a coffee cup and a plate of cookies. She is followed by Helen, who also carries a cup.

NORMA: Come on in here, Helen. I always feel more relaxed in the family room. We can put our feet up, or under, or wherever we like.

HELEN: Good. That's how I like my before-dinner coffee breaks. No bother about whether I'm going to spill something on your nice living room rug or get a fingermark on that cut-velvet couch cover.

Norma laughs and puts her cup and cookies down on the table before she seats herself. Helen also puts down her cup and sits. They can be seated either on a couch before a coffee table or in two chairs at a small table.

HELEN: (*enthusiastically*) Norma, you were simply wonderful at our consciousness-raising session yesterday! You're always so logical that anybody who is the least bit weak-kneed about the idea of women's liberation has the props knocked right out from under her shilly-shallying.

NORMA: Oh? I'd never thought I was really forceful. I'm still just sort of feeling my own way into the thing.

HELEN: Feeling is right! Anybody can see how strongly you feel it all.

NORMA: Yes, I suppose I do, really. I started being rebellious about this male-female thing when I was a little girl. When my brothers acted like little stinkers, my parents were very stern with them, but I was smart enough to see that they had a sort of grin-behind-the-hand attitude about it. They were just a little bit proud that they had—quote—real boys. But when I misbehaved, they were really mortified. I was supposed to be a proper little lady—docile.

HELEN: You see what I mean? You express things so well.

Norma passes the cookies and takes a sip of coffee before she replies.

NORMA: If you asked me to state my convictions about the relationship between men and women, I'd have to say that I believe in absolute equality. What a man wants and needs for his self-realization is no more important than what a woman wants and needs. That's a principle, and principles are always neat and simple. Human situations, though, are a lot more complex. I found that out last night.

HELEN: (*warily*) What happened?

NORMA: You know that young people's drama group I've been directing at the church? I've had some really talented kids in the bunch, and we seem to have attracted some attention.

HELEN: Oh, you've done wonders with them!

NORMA: Well, last night, to my absolute amazement, I got a call from an interchurch group in Chicago that is starting a major drama program, and they offered me a job directing the whole thing.

HELEN: How marvelous!

NORMA: That's what I thought. I was simply floating. This project has real money behind it, and I thought how wonderful it would be to be able to develop a program without having to skimp.

HELEN: Exactly!

NORMA: When Bob came home and I told him about it, he said, "Well, I'm glad somebody

else sees what a smart little wife I have. It's a shame you can't take the job, Honey." I just looked at him and said, "But why can't I?"

HELEN: Oh-oh! And what did he say then?

NORMA: He looked at me as if I'd lost my mind and said, "Well, you aren't planning to divorce me, are you? My job is here." I thought about how men always seem to assume that their wives can do only the things that dovetail with their own plans, and I lost my temper. I practically shouted, "Bob, for Pete's sake, you're a salesman! You can be a salesman anywhere!"

HELEN: Good for you!

NORMA: I've never seen Bob look so hurt. He said, "I had no idea you thought my job so unimportant." I felt like a dog, because I know how hard he's worked and what a key spot he has with his company. I wanted to tell him that I've always been proud of him, but I was too mad and too stubborn. We didn't speak to each other the rest of the evening, and this morning he stalked out like a wooden soldier.

HELEN: Oh, he'll cool off. It won't hurt him to have his ego jolted a little.

NORMA: Won't it? Helen, I was miserable all morning. My thoughts went around and around. I knew that the last thing I wanted to do was to beat Bob down. I know you're go-

ing to think I copped out, but—well, I called those people in Chicago and told them I couldn't take the job.

HELEN: You didn't!

NORMA: Yes.

HELEN: (*rising and putting her hands on her hips*) So here we are back in the nineteenth century. The little woman can express herself if it doesn't interfere with her duties to the master.

NORMA: (*laughing*) Oh, sit down, Helen. Please! (*Helen sits*) It's been a long day, and I've had time to think more about this business of self-expression. I don't want to get it confused with power and material ambition. I've been asking myself what is so different about what I'd do in Chicago from what I've been doing here. I'd earn a salary instead of getting a gratuity, and I'd have more money to work with. But I, as a person, wouldn't be any more creative.

HELEN: My friend, you are rationalizing a surrender. You are simply giving in to the notion that the woman must always be the one to adjust.

NORMA: We've had more practice at adjusting than men have, and we aren't crushed by it. Little boys are brought up to believe it's a man's world, and it may take some time for them to get used to this equality bit. We may have to be patient for awhile.

HELEN: Norma, do you know what you're talking? Gradualism! Blacks saw through that business of wait-a-while a long time ago. We women have to reject it, too. The time is now! You've had a chance to do something important and creative. Bob could have worked in Chicago as easily as here. Every relevant factor in the situation says that you are right and he is wrong.

STOP ACTION

At this point the action of the play may be stopped and the audience asked to speculate upon what will happen next. The readers playing Norma, Helen and Bob should join the discussion, but not give away the ending. They might indicate their own feelings at this point, and the feelings they think the characters might have. Has anyone in the audience lived through a similar experience? What are Norma's obligations to Bob? What are her obligations to herself? Is Helen looking at the situation realistically? At the end of this discussion break, the action of the play may continue.

HELEN: Norma, do you know what you're talking? Gradualism! Blacks saw through that business of wait-a-while a long time ago. We women have to reject it, too. The time is now! You've had a chance to do something important and creative. Bob could have worked in Chicago as easily as here. Every relevant factor in the situation says that you are right and he is wrong.

NORMA: I'm afraid there is one purely irrelevant factor that tipped the scales.

HELEN: Meaning?

NORMA: I love my husband and I want him to be happy.

HELEN: You're hopeless!

NORMA: Inconsistent, at least. I admit it.

BOB: *(calling from offstage)* Hi! Anybody home?

HELEN: *(jumping up)* I hear your master's voice. Guess I'll run along. I do hope you have some second thoughts.

She starts for the door, meets Bob as he enters, and makes a low bow.

HELEN: Good evening, master of the house! *(she leaves)*

BOB: Well, what was that all about?

NORMA: Oh, one of her moods. Bob, come and sit down. I want to talk to you about our argument last night.

He crosses and seats himself beside her.

BOB: Honey, you were absolutely right. I am a double-dyed oaf. It took me a while to see it—in fact, I stewed all morning. But by noon I was remembering how we always try to see each other's point of view, so I began trying to think how it would seem to you. The upshot was that I realized how absurd it was for me to imagine that a crack salesman like me—see how conceited I am?—couldn't get a good job in Chicago.

I went in and told the boss I was quitting.

NORMA: Oh, no, Bob, you didn't!

BOB: Cross my heart and hope to live. He asked me why and I told him. He looked absolutely delighted, and I thought, "Cripes, he's glad to get rid of me!" Then he explained that the company is opening a new office in Chicago, and they had hoped to send one of the top men out there. They were afraid none of us would want to relocate. He offered me the job, and Honey, the best of it is that they're giving me an increase in salary!

NORMA: Why—why, that's just great.

BOB: You don't sound very excited. Don't you see? This solves everything.

NORMA: Not exactly. You see, Bob, I called Chicago today and told them I couldn't take the job they offered me. They may have someone else by now.

BOB: But why—oh, great! Did we louse things up! Look, I don't think they'll have gotten someone else this fast. Why don't you call them back and tell them you've reconsidered?

NORMA: Well, yes—I think that's the thing to do. The way things have worked out, it looks as if it's the right move for us.

She starts for the door, but Bob catches her hand and draws her back.

BOB: Norma, you know I'm an old-fashioned guy. I don't believe in all that stuff you and Helen have been preaching about women's liberation. I still think the most important thing a woman does is to look after her home—and her children. We do want to have children, don't we, Norma?

NORMA: Of course.

BOB: I think a woman ought to stay at home with her children—be there when they come home from school—and all that.

NORMA: They'll be *our* children, Bob, not just mine. And there are day-care centers, babysitters, and—

BOB: Cripes!

NORMA: If you feel so strongly about all this, Bob, why did you offer to give up your job so that I could be—what you think a woman shouldn't be?

BOB: Where you are concerned, Norma, I've never been able to decide things just on the basis of what I feel and believe. Ever since I first fell in love with you, I've wanted you to have whatever would make you happy. When we were dating, I loved bringing you flowers and candy and any little thing that would please you. After we were married, I wanted you to have the house you liked, the furniture you liked, and all the rest. Today, I guess I realized for the first time that when you

really love someone, you have to give when it hurts. Am I making any sense?

NORMA: Of course, the purely irrelevant factor.

BOB: What are you talking about?

NORMA: (*laughing*) I'll explain later. If I'm going to make that phone call, I'll have to hurry.

She links her arm through his, and they walk offstage together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Since not every conflict in husband and wife careers can be so happily resolved as in the case of Norma and Bob, what principles do you feel should guide the making of a choice?
2. If there are children in a family, to what degree should their needs be considered in determining when, whether and how much of a career a mother can have?
3. When Norma said to Bob that if they had children the children would be *theirs*, not *hers*, what point was she trying to make? Do you agree with it?
4. Do you feel it is necessary for a couple to have children to become a family? Give reasons for your answer.

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Mae Hurley Ashworth

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About the Authors

Myra Scovel has lived in India and has written, among others, the drama, "The Convert" found in *Facets of Faith: Dramatic Discussion Starters*. "The Convert" is a probing look at what it means for a young Hindu girl to change her religion.

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Gordon C. Bennett is an assistant professor of speech and drama at Eastern Baptist College, Philadelphia. He is author of *God Is My Fuehrer*, a dramatic portrayal of the life and times of Martin Niemoeller, courageous German pastor who dared to oppose Adolf Hitler.

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